



**Brought to you by the Federal Financial Management  
(FFM) Subcommittee – Minority Office**

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*For a full list of the most recent Your Tax Dollars At Work outrages, please check out  
the FFM Your Tax Dollars At Work homepage at:*

<http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/index.cfm?FuseAction=YourTaxDollarsAtWork.Home>

October 31, 2006 ([Permalink](#))

### DHS renews contract with Limo Company caught up in Congressional bribery scandal

Why has the Department of Homeland Security extended a contract worth \$21 million to a company under federal investigation and owned by a man with a 62-page long rap sheet?  
[ABC News reports:](#)

"Shirlington, of Arlington, Va., is part of a federal investigation into whether a defense contractor provided disgraced former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham of California with prostitutes and limos. Cunningham is serving jail time for taking bribes from defense contractors. Shirlington's president, Christopher Baker, has appeared before a grand jury in San Diego as part of the ongoing investigation."

"A House Homeland Security subcommittee held a hearing over the summer on how Shirlington got two Homeland Security contracts, including the one last year, despite a history of problems. Baker has a criminal record and his company has been accused of poor service on other contracts, including one that was terminated by Howard University in 2002."

October 11, 2006 ([Permalink](#))

### Investigation shows FEMA spent millions on puppet shows, bingo, yoga



*BINGO! FEMA weather bingo for seniors*

The [South Florida Sun Sentinel](#) reports on FEMA tax money at work and uncovers Hurricane Bingo, puppet shows, "salsa for seniors" and yoga on the beach.

At the Pinitos Learning Center in Boca Raton, disaster workers dressed as "Windy Biggie" and "Sunny" teach 30 preschoolers a song about how the wind is good, even during a hurricane. "Windy Biggie is our friend. Windy Biggie is strong wind. She turns, turns, turns, turns around. She's knocking things to the ground."

Last year, the Federal Emergency Management Agency awarded Florida \$22.6 million for "crisis counseling" for victims of hurricanes Wilma and Katrina. [[Click here to view news report](#). You've got to see it to believe it. Enable pop-ups.]

Florida's program, called Project H.O.P.E. -- Helping Our People in Emergencies -- is still in operation with about 450 workers across the state who spend much of their time leading games and performing shows for groups of residents -- regardless of whether they're in crisis or even experienced the storms, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel has found. [Click here](#) to read the Sun Sentinel's entire series on FEMA waste.

[10/13/06 UPDATE](#): House members request Inspector General investigate Project H.O.P.E.

FLASHBACK: The House Republican Study Committee uncovered [FEMA's wasteful, out of touch](#) ways and found that Northern Virginia received \$13.4 million in FEMA funds to pay for gardens and "healing spaces", peace and anger management workshops, and other therapeutic activities for post-9/11 mental health.

**September 29, 2006** ([Permalink](#))

### **FEMA blows money intended for emergencies on kiddie games and website**

Here are your tax dollars—intended for assistance of emergencies-- [at work](#). Instead of rock, paper, scissors, try your hand at water, rain and wind. Want more? [Click here](#) to see all of the webgames FEMA has developed with your tax dollars.

And if you're into rap, check out FEMA's "Kidzrap". [Listen and sing along](#).

Disaster . . . it can happen anywhere,  
But we've got a few tips, so you can be prepared  
For floods, tornadoes, or even a 'quake,  
You've got to be ready - so your heart don't break.

Disaster prep is your responsibility  
And mitigation is important to our agency.

People helping people is what we do  
And FEMA is there to help see you through  
When disaster strikes, we are at our best  
But we're ready all the time, 'cause disasters don't rest.

*Written and performed by Scott J. Wolfson*

Several government websites are directed towards the next generation of taxpayers and blur the line between information and propaganda, [read about it here](#).

**September 21, 2006** ([Permalink](#))

### **Homeland security grants by Skagit County, WA: County sues after selling \$8,000 copier for \$250**



*A Copier for Homeland Security*

Skagit County (WA) purchased a nearly \$8000 copy machine (reportedly planning to pay for it with federal Homeland Security grant funds) to be used at their Department of Emergency Management. The machine was supposed to be stored temporarily at the county shop. But, according to news reports, a mishap occurred that's caused quite a headache for everyone involved.

*When the copier arrived, there was no room for it at the Department of Emergency Management, so it was stored in a warehouse next to the surplus items. Owner Jeff Brown bought [it] for around \$250 at Skagit County's surplus property auction. "The people who were conducting the auction didn't realize that it had been stored there and accidentally sold it at the auction," said Skagit County Administrator Gary Rowe. A state audit found the county did not have sufficient safeguards in place to avoid such a mistake. Brown says that's the county's problem, not his. To get the copier back, Brown said the county has offered to give him as much as \$5,000 for the machine. But he said he's told them he's not interested.*

**Local news story on the mix-up:** [County sues after selling \\$8,000 copier for \\$250](#) and [Auctioned copier big headache for buyer](#)

**County audit findings:** [Skagit County did not have adequate controls in place to prevent a newly purchased copier from being sold at auction.](#)

September 14, 2006 ([Permalink](#))

#### Connecticut Towns Told to Spend Federal Funds or Else

***Small towns told to spend nearly half a million dollars they don't want or need***

Throughout the country, small towns and jurisdictions are being told to spend homeland security they don't want or need despite the shortages of such funding in major cities. The latest example comes from Connecticut, where the state Department of Homeland Security is pushing its towns to spend money they don't seem to want or need. From yesterday's [Firehouse.com](#):

*Five years after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the flow of federal money targeted to fight terrorism has dwindled and many major U.S. cities are complaining about severe funding cuts. But a review of state records shows that many Connecticut towns won't spend all they've been provided and often had to be pushed just to spend anything.*

*The review also found that communities have used the cash for emergency equipment typically funded through a municipal budget, such as air packs, generators and new communication centers. Others have purchased fully loaded SUVs, all-terrain vehicles and other items some law enforcement authorities say are of marginal anti-terrorism benefit.*

***"My big question is, are we using the money in the most expeditious ways to combat terrorism or are we just getting new equipment for all these towns, some of which they probably don't even need, so that everybody can feel good?" Clinton Police Chief Joseph Faughnan said.***

Excellent question.

August 25, 2006 ([Permalink](#))

#### 9/11 loans for VT Dunkin' Donuts, small WY town gets priority over NYC for emergency equipment

A recent John Stossel op ed highlights the boundless energy within government to spend your tax dollars, but the precious little effort put into prioritizing one "need" over another.

One result is that the police and fire departments in Casper, Wyo., (population 49,644), can talk to one another, and to their hospitals and EMS units, on a brand-new communications system. New York City (population 8,000,000) is still waiting for a similar system. Colchester, Vt., got \$58,000 for a rescue vehicle capable of boring through concrete to search for victims in collapsed buildings. Colchester has a population of 18,000 souls and a severe shortage of big buildings.

The article even points out that sex may fast be becoming a government right:

Because our bloated government just cannot stop vomiting out the money. For years Medicaid has been spending millions of dollars on Viagra and other erectile dysfunction drugs. The Clinton administration told states they had to pay, because the law requires that Medicaid pay for any FDA-approved drug deemed medically necessary. Bush administration officials kept the policy.

**August 1, 2006 ([Permalink](#))**

**Homeland Security Funds Used to Advertise Fish Fries in Indiana**

***Local officials say residents enjoyed the advertisements, event turnout larger than normal***

[Warning! Fish fry ahead!](#) Indiana homeland security officials have warned Vermillion County to stop using electronic emergency message boards to advertise fish fries, spaghetti dinners and other events, the *South Bend Tribune* reports.

Homeland Security, which bought the 11 signs for \$300,000, said the county could risk losing federal money. The county has stopped using the signs for the community announcements, and commissioners plan to discuss the matter in the coming week.

Local officials said the signs do get people's attention. Ramon Colombo, director of Vermillion County Emergency Management, said sponsors of a spaghetti dinner fundraiser and an elementary school carnival reported larger-than-normal turnouts after message board ads. The Cayuga volunteer fire department used the messages to promote its fish fry.

**July 31, 2006 ([Permalink](#))**

**House Committee Report Finds "Waste, Abuse, Mismanagement" in DHS Contracts**

***Many contracts found to be non-competitively bid***

[An extensive report](#) released by the House Government Reform Committee last week found large amounts of waste, fraud and abuse throughout federal contracting at the Department of Homeland Security. Some key findings of the report conclude that:

- Contract spending at DHS is soaring: Since 2003, contracts spending has increased 189%
- Non-competitive contract spending at DHS is soaring: Between 2003 and 2005, non-competitive contracts increased 739%
- Contract mismanagement is widespread
- Costs to taxpayers are soaring: DHS has more than \$34 billion in contracts that are plagued by mismanagement and waste.

[Click here to learn about S. 2590](#), the Coburn-Obama bill which would bring transparency to the taxpayers by creating a website to disclose important information about every recipient of federal funds so that more accountability will follow. The website would include information about government contract spending as well as grants.

**July 19, 2006 ([Permalink](#))**

**Homeland Security Department Accused of Credit Card Misuse**

***Lack of leadership and inadequate financial controls contributed to waste, fraud and abuse***

The Government Accountability Office found that the 45 percent of purchases made by the Department of Homeland Security during the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita did not have appropriate preauthorization by supervisors; and 63 percent did not include documentation stating whether the goods or services had been received. \$68,500 worth of unused dog booties and a \$227 beer brewing kit are among many unjustifiable purchases made.

"Due to a lack of leadership" at the department, the audit says, a draft manual for employee use of purchase cards has never been finished, creating weaknesses that "leave D.H.S. highly vulnerable to fraudulent, improper and abusive activity."

Congress has already found the Homeland Security Department responsible for up to \$2 billion of waste and fraud related to the hurricanes last year.

For complete article, click [here](#).

View the Committee hearing page on this topic [here](#).

**June 27, 2006 ([Permalink](#))**

**Government Officials Accept Bribes in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina**

Believe it or not...more breathtaking examples of bogus claims of FEMA assistance including government officials orchestrating elaborate scams for personal financial gain.

One Louisiana Department of Labor clerk, Wayne P. Lawless, has been charged with issuing about 80 fraudulent disaster unemployment benefit cards in exchange for bribes of up to \$300 per application. [Click here to read more.](#)

**June 23, 2006 ([Permalink](#))**

**Government continues to subsidize building in hurricane-prone areas**

Should the federal government encourage and even pay for development in high risk hurricane prone areas? [Interesting article](#) that links programs and attitudes that influence and subsidize people to move to such areas with the noticeable growth trend of putting more and more people into hurricane prone areas.

The [North Carolina] state government recently bought 600 acres of farmland on the outskirts of Southport with the intention of building one of the largest seaports on the East Coast. The state is predicting that the port will create thousands of jobs and be an enormous economic boon to the Carolina coast. Meanwhile, meteorologists warn that the area -- as well as the rest of the southern half of the Eastern Seaboard and the Gulf Coast -- faces a growing risk of being hit by a storm packing the wallop of Katrina.

Thus, Southport stands at the dangerous intersection of two dramatic trends: One is the government-subsidized growth of the nation's hurricane-zone population. The other is the increased ferocity of the average hurricane season -- an upswing in the frequency and intensity of named storms that contrasts markedly with the comparatively quiet hurricane seasons typical of the quarter-century that ended in 1995.

As Katrina demonstrated, however, when a monster storm slams ashore, the federal government is on the hook for rescue and repair expenses. The article points out that "the more developed the spot where a powerful storm makes landfall, the more costly the cleanup."

Given the fact that the federal government increasingly assumes the financial risks of locating on the coast including: highway expansion for coastal development, highway repair after a storm, subsidized loans from the EPA to help construct water and sewer lines to spur growth in coastal zones, Homeland Security grants to shore up emergency communications systems and evacuation routes, not to mention flood insurance....

[Read the entire article.](#) The Chairman of the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission calls federal flood insurance the "icing on the cake." Indeed.

June 14, 2006 ([Permalink](#))  
**FEMA Funds Spent on Divorce, Sex Change**

**By LARRY MARGASAK, The Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) - Houston divorce lawyer Mark Lipkin says he can't recall anyone paying for his services with a FEMA debit card, but congressional investigators say one of his clients did just that.

The \$1,000 payment was just one example cited in an audit that concluded that up to \$1.4 billion - perhaps as much as 16 percent of the billions of dollars in assistance expended after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita - was spent for bogus reasons.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also was hoodwinked to pay for season football tickets, a tropical vacation and a sex change operation, the audit found. Prison inmates, a supposed victim who used a New Orleans cemetery for a home address and a person who spent 70 days at a Hawaiian hotel all were able to get taxpayer help, according to evidence that gives a new black eye to the nation's disaster relief agency.

[Read more.](#)

April 21, 2006 ([Permalink](#))  
**Homeland Security Grants Spent on Clowns and Gyms**  
*Funds to help states prepare for terror get frittered away on frivolity...*

**By Audrey Hudson, The Washington Times**

Because Homeland Security grants go to states and localities on a socialist-everyone-is-equal formula basis rather than sending the most money to the places at greatest risk for terror threats, many states and localities do not have enough to spend their grant money on. [Waste, such as critical preparedness funds being used on clowns and gyms, is simply a symptom of this problem.](#)

April 17, 2006 ([Permalink](#))  
**Wasteful Spending from Hurricane Relief Approaching \$1 Billion**

[The Washington Post](#) covers a new report that details numerous examples of poor efforts to contain costs in hurricane relief effort.

Millions more than necessary have been spent providing lodging for people on cruise ships and in hotels, despite evidence that much cheaper housing was available. Poor planning and coordination are being blamed for the federal government's wasting \$1 billion out of \$10 billion in hurricane relief.

April 17, 2006 ([Permalink](#))  
**The Senate's Deadly Sin: Larding Up Emergency Appropriations**

The same Congress that expanded federal government spending by 45 percent since 2001 and enacted the most expensive agriculture, education, Medicare, energy and highway (containing the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere") bills in American history is on the verge adding another budget-busting boondoggle to its fiscal record, The Heritage Foundation writes in a WebMemo today.

President George W. Bush requested an emergency appropriation of \$92 billion for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and another round of hurricane recovery. The House approved the request, but the Senate Appropriations Committee has loaded the measure **with \$14 billion in new spending, most unrelated to national security or hurricane recovery.** Still not satisfied, Senators are now readying floor amendments to add as much as \$10 billion more in spending, which would push the price tag to \$24 billion above the President's request.

[Read the Memo here.](#)